

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**1. Name of Property**historic name Greenlease Cadillac Buildingother names/site number N/A**2. Location**street & number 2900 Gillham Road [N/A] not for publicationcity or town Kansas City [N/A] vicinitystate Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64108**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments ☐.)

Mark A. Miles
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

April 28, 2003
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments ☐.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date

☐ entered in the National RegisterSee continuation sheet ☐.☐ determined eligible for the
National RegisterSee continuation sheet ☐.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the
National Register☐ other, explainSee continuation sheet ☐.

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Jackson County, MO

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> Total
		<u>1</u>	<u> </u> Total

**Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National
Register.**

**Name of related multiple property
listing.**

N/AN/A**6. Function or Use****Historic Function**

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
 COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

Current Functions

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials

foundation CONCRETE
 walls CONCRETE
 roof SYNTHETICS
 other TERRACOTTA

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

1918-1952

Significant Dates

1918

1950

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Haverkamp, Lewis W.

Mosby-Goodrich Construction Company

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☐ Federal Agency

☒ Local Government

☒ University

☒ Other:

Name of repository: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library;
Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri,
Kansas City.

Greenlease Cadillac Building**Jackson County, MO****10. Geographical Data****Acreage of Property** less than one acre**UTM References**A. Zone Easting Northing
15 / 363400 / 4326160

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Elizabeth Rosin, Partner & Kerry Davis, Architectural Historianorganization Historic Preservation Services, LLC date November 2002street & number 323 West 8th Street, Suite 112 telephone 816-221-5133city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64105**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black-and-white photographs** of the property.**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name UHP3, LLCstreet & number 2838 Warwick Trafficway telephone 816-472-9555city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64108

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Greenlease Cadillac Building
Jackson County, MO

MATERIALS: (cont.)

Walls: BRICK

SUMMARY

The Greenlease Cadillac Building is located at 2900 Gillham Road in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. The four-story, reinforced concrete structure is clad in reddish-brown brick and executed in the Commercial Style. Surrounding the flat, membrane roof is a raised parapet with terracotta coping and a slightly castellated profile. The irregular footprint of this 76,000-square-foot building reflects the wedge-shaped lot upon which it is sited. The rectangular form of the building curves on the west side, tapering to follow the alignment of McGee Trafficway. The narrow south end of the building housed the Cadillac dealership, while the squarer north end and upper floors held service and storage areas. On the north end is a one-story, concrete block addition constructed in 1950. Surface parking lots and small, twentieth century, light industrial and commercial buildings define the area surrounding the Greenlease Cadillac Building.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The irregular yet graceful footprint of the Greenlease Cadillac Building responds to the wedge-shaped block formed by McGee Trafficway, 29th Street, and Gillham Road. Like the block, the north end of the building has a standard rectangular form. At the building's midpoint the west wall curves inward paralleling the alignment of McGee Trafficway. The south wall clips the point of the triangular lot, setting the building back from the edge of the street.

The structure of the building's main block is apparent in the strong horizontal and vertical members that compose the exterior. The fenestration of each façade is arranged in long, tall bands on each floor. Thick, flat, horizontal brick spandrels separate the windows on each floor of the primary façades, which face east (Gillham Road), west (McGee Trafficway), and south (McGee Trafficway). Interrupting the strong horizontality are brick pilasters that project one header width and divide the east, west, and south walls into irregular bays. The brick has a textured surface and raked joints filled with light-colored mortar.

Each elevation contains two or three wide bays flanked by narrower bays at the corners. The exception is the south elevation, which is a single, wide bay. The pilasters flanking the outer, narrow bays of the east and west façades and the single bay on the south rise from the concrete foundation through the terracotta cornice to the top of the parapet. Shorter pilasters separate the central bays on each of these façades. These elements rise from the foundation to the top of the fourth story windows where they terminate in simple terracotta capitals.

At the top of each full-height pilaster is a terracotta medallion featuring the Cadillac crest draped by a garland of leaves. The crests interrupt the projecting terracotta cornice that encircles the primary façades of the building just below the parapet. Centrally located on the south façade, a terracotta crest draped with a sash and garland of leaves rises from the cornice above the parapet wall.

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**Greenlease Cadillac Building
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Fenestration of the primary façades includes bands of five-over-five and six-over-six double-hung steel windows arranged in groups of two, three, four, and five. Each grouping of windows has a single terracotta sill. Glazed terracotta squares form continuous lintels above the fourth-story windows on the primary elevations. Thin, horizontally striated, metal lintels separate the first-story showroom display windows from their transoms. The plate glass display windows are extant but currently sandwiched between plywood boards on the exterior and fiberglass insulation on the interior. Boards on the interior and the exterior cover the transoms above the display windows. Between the transom and the first horizontal spandrel is a horizontal concrete beam. Several doorways and garage bays also pierce the first-story walls. Plywood boards on the exterior and fiberglass insulation on the interior cover the primary entrance on the south.

The secondary façade is on the north (29th Street) side of the building. This elevation exhibits the same legible structure as the primary façades, however it lacks the decorative brick veneer, pilasters, and terracotta cornice. The fenestration of the north façade includes sixteen-pane steel windows with central, operable, hopper panels.

The concrete block addition on the north end of the building has a shallow, barrel-shaped metal truss roof system. The walls are clad with reddish-brown brick that matches the color of the main building. The concrete cap on the raised parapet aligns with the sills of the second-story windows on the adjacent main block. A thin band of cast stone enframes the grouped window openings on each elevation. Vertical, brick spandrels that echo the main block's pilasters separate the four window openings within each enframement. Boards cover these windows in the same manner as those on the main block. Two loading docks interrupt the regular rhythm of openings on the north end of this block.

On the interior, the most distinctive space is the first-story auto showroom that occupies the triangular south end of the building. With a 20-foot-high ceiling and sufficient floor space to display twelve cars, this space retains its original finishes, including a tile floor, marble wainscoting, plaster ceiling, walls, and columns. The columns have ornamental capitals that include the Cadillac shield and floral swags. An ornamental plaster cornice molding with picture rail encircles the room. At the rear of this space is a paneled plaster wall with marble wainscoting. Several large openings in this wall access the former sales offices and the general manager's office.

The remainder of the interior is highly utilitarian. The large, open spaces have concrete floors and ceilings. The walls are concrete above the windows and exposed brick below the windows. Concrete columns with polygonal caps punctuate each level at regular intervals. A stairwell and a freight elevator large enough to transport a car are located at the center of the building.

The Greenlease Cadillac Building occupies the entire, wedge-shaped block bounded by 29th Street on the north, Gillham Road on the east, and McGee Trafficway on the west. McGee Trafficway is a wide, two-lane road that runs northwest-southeast between Gillham Road and 26th Street. Gillham Road is a north-south arterial that narrows from six lanes to four lanes north of 29th Street. To the north and east are surface parking lots. Small, twentieth century, light industrial and commercial buildings are found beyond the parking lots and on the west side of McGee Trafficway. Further west, the grade rises steeply

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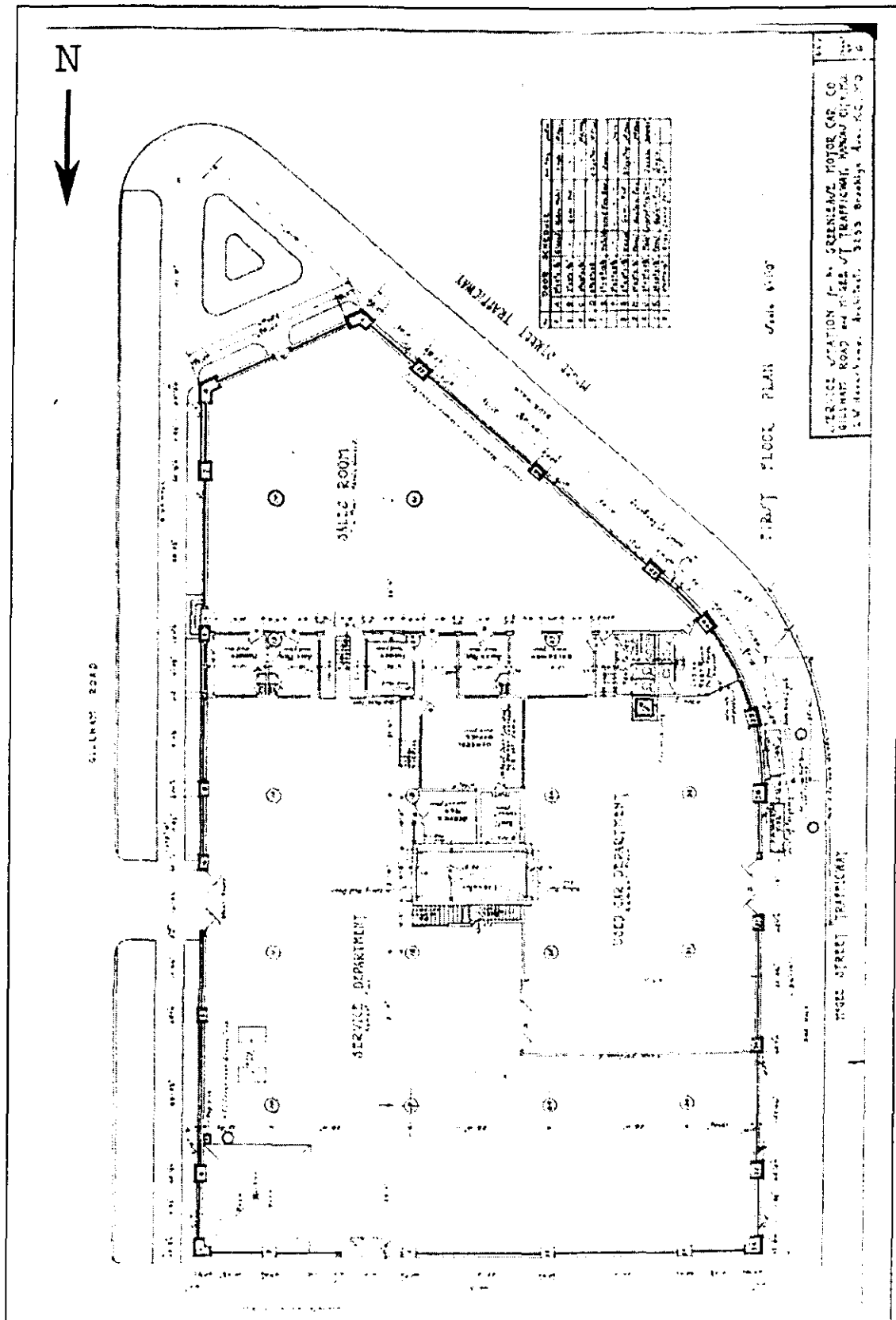
to the grounds of Union Cemetery. Narrow, grass easement strips flank the concrete sidewalks that surround the building.

INTEGRITY

The Greenlease Cadillac Building retains a high degree of integrity with no significant alterations. All of the character-defining elements of its design, materials, and workmanship remain intact, both on the interior and the exterior. The first-story showroom, in particular, retains all of its distinctive architectural elements, including the Cadillac heraldry at the top of the columns. Cadillac corporate imagery is intact at the building's terracotta cornice as well. The only missing element is the canopy that was originally above the main entrance on the south end of the building. The Greenlease Cadillac Building's form, configuration of spaces, and surrounding environment clearly convey its original function as an early automobile dealership and distributorship.

Greenlease Cadillac Building
Jackson County, MO

ORIGINAL PLANS — FIRST FLOOR



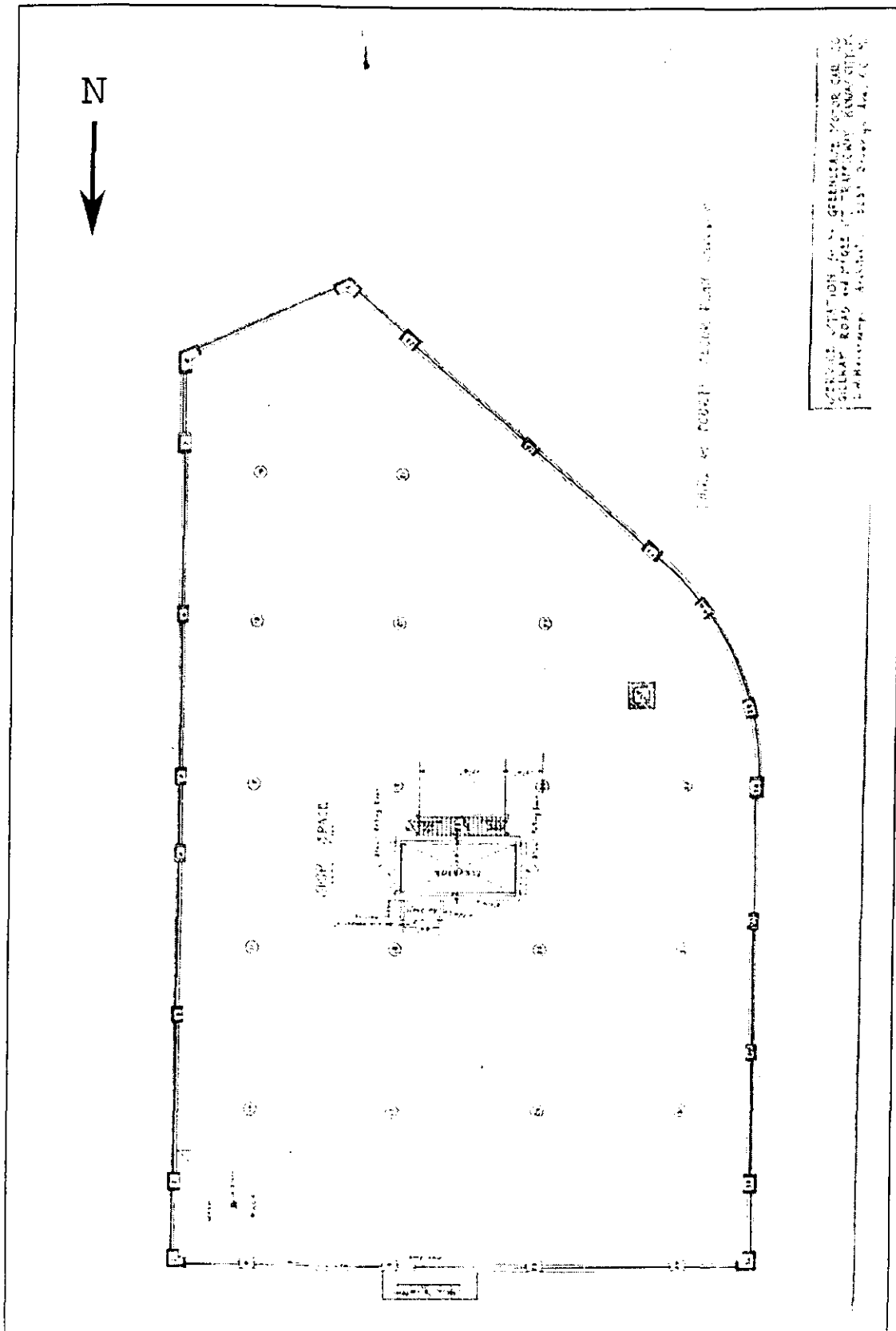
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ORIGINAL PLANS — THIRD AND FOURTH FLOORS



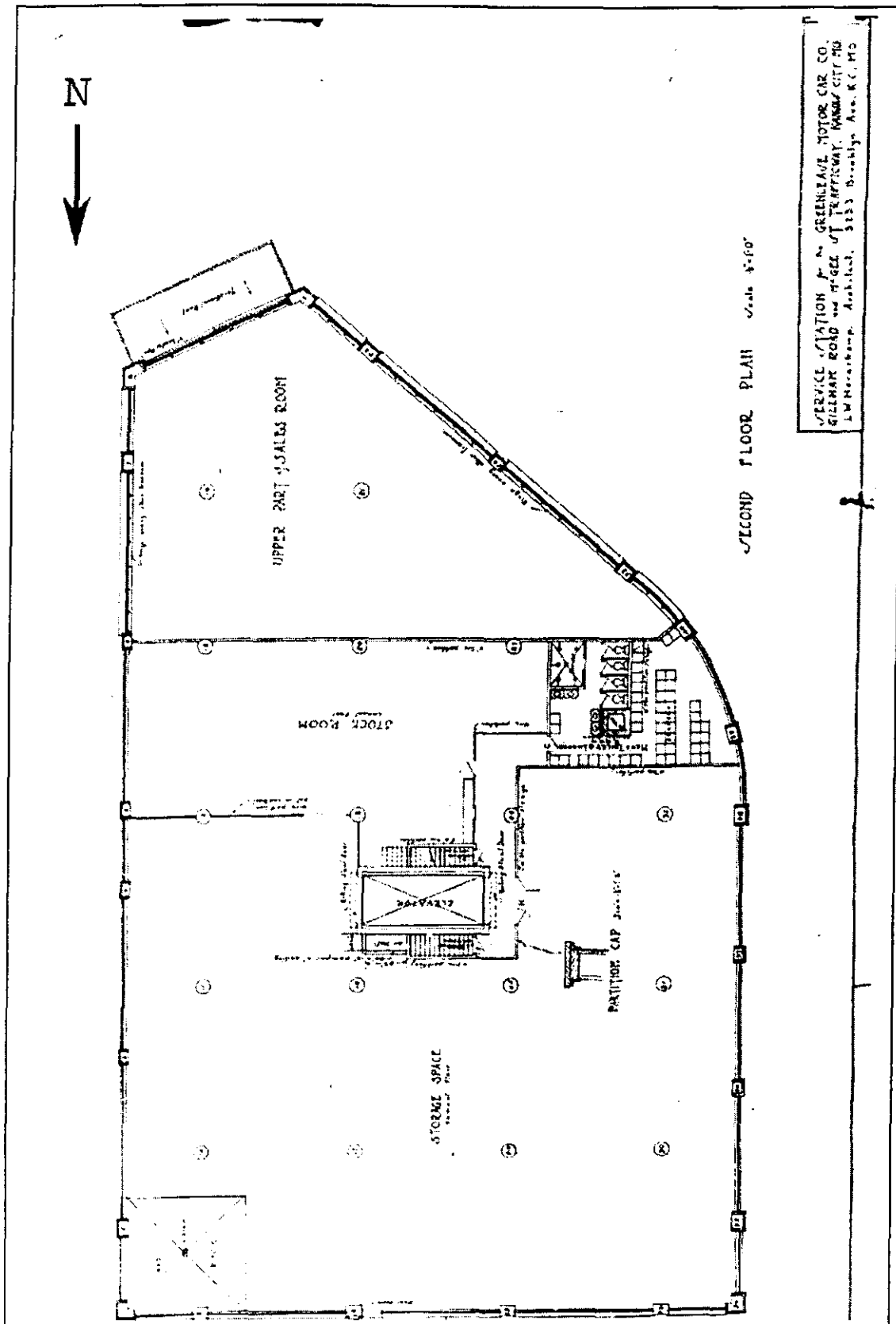
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ORIGINAL PLANS — SECOND FLOOR



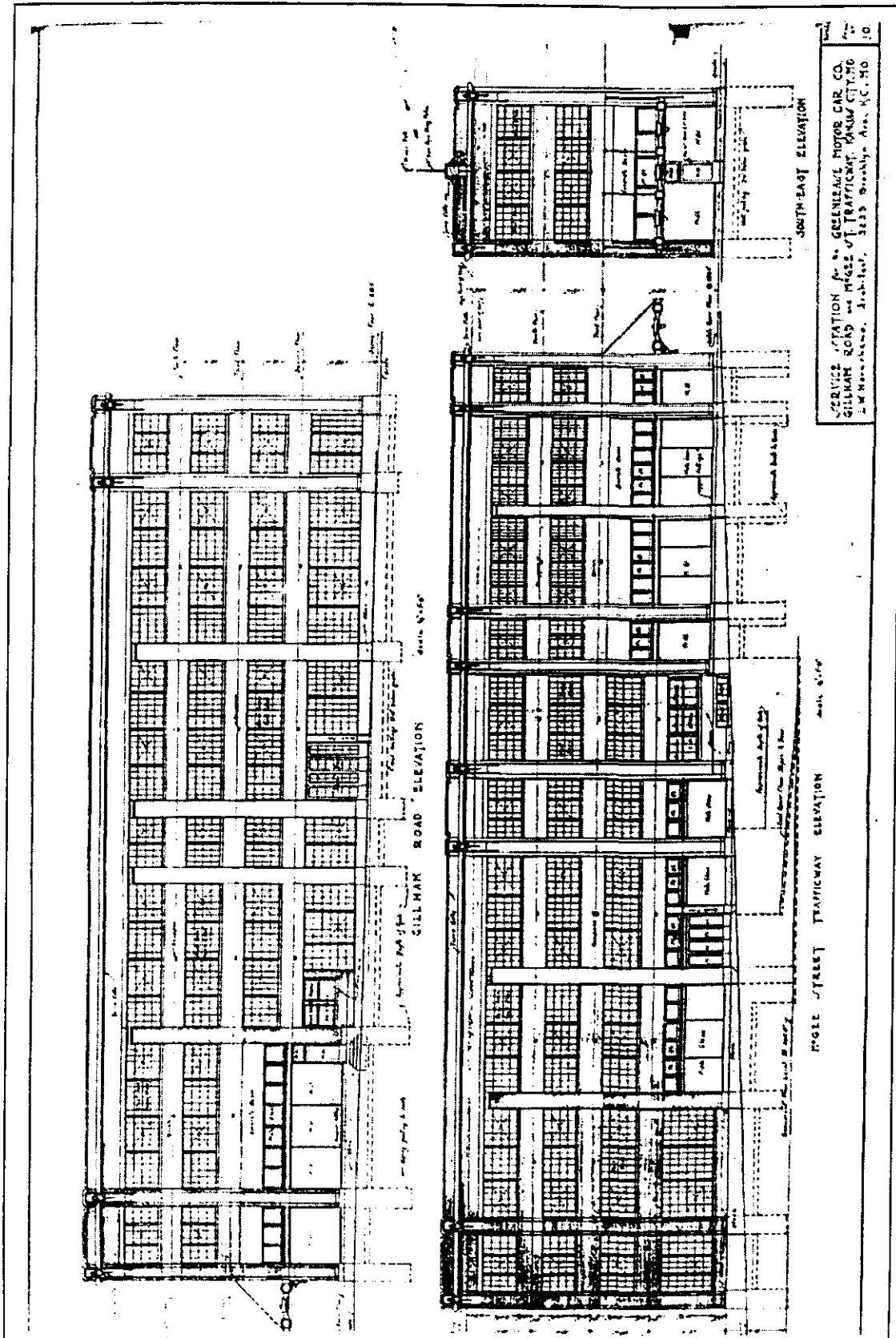
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ORIGINAL PLANS — PRIMARY ELEVATIONS



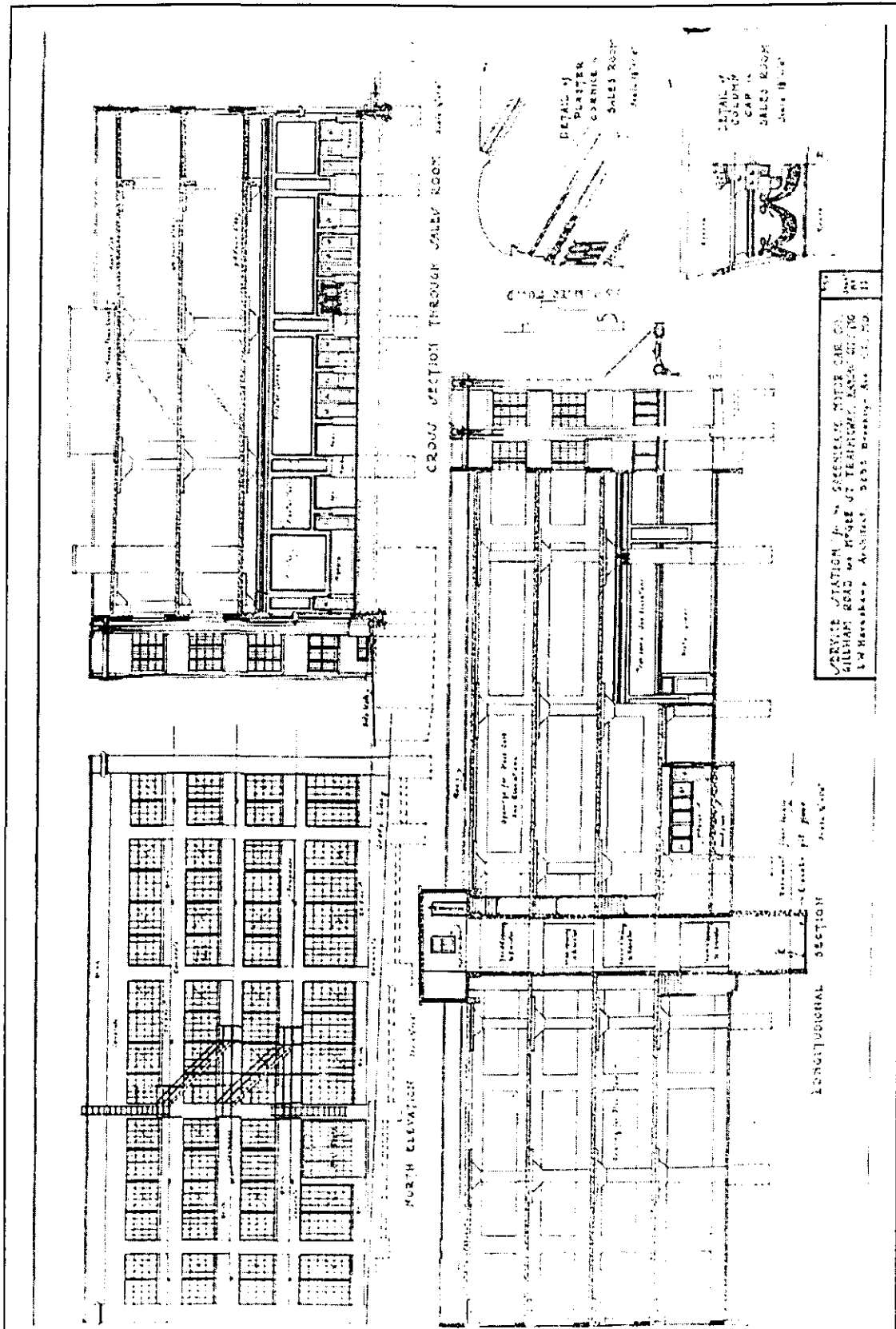
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ORIGINAL PLANS — NORTH ELEVATION AND SECTIONS



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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Greenlease Cadillac Building is significant under National Register Criterion A in the area COMMERCE and under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. Located at 2900 Gillham Road a short distance from downtown Kansas City, Missouri, this building is an excellent and rare example of an early automobile dealership and distributorship. Built in 1918, the Greenlease Cadillac Building represents a building form designed to address the combined needs of an auto dealership and distributorship that included a distinctive showroom integrated with functional service and storage spaces. Its reinforced concrete structure illustrates the early adaptation of this twentieth century construction technique for auto-related buildings. The brick cladding and restrained terracotta embellishments illustrate popular interpretations of commercial architecture and the established practice of disguising the concrete beneath.

In addition, the Greenlease Cadillac Building is notable as the headquarters of the Robert C. Greenlease auto empire. Founded in 1908, the Greenlease Motor Car Company was both a Cadillac dealer and distributor. Robert Greenlease leveraged the opportunities provided by his role as Cadillac distributor to expand his business. By 1929 his territory stretched across five states and he controlled five of the seventeen Cadillac distributorships nationwide.¹ In 1967, General Motors celebrated the Greenlease Motor Car Company as the most senior of their 14,000 dealerships operating in the United States. The Greenlease Cadillac Building represents not only the expansion of the Greenlease auto empire, but the broader the development of the auto industry in Kansas City, Missouri.

The period of significance for the Greenlease Cadillac Building is 1918-1952. The beginning of this range reflects the date of construction. The ending date reflects the arbitrary fifty-year cutoff established by the National Register program. It also acknowledges historic alterations to the building that reflect the growth and expansion of the Greenlease Motor Car Company.

ELABORATION

At a time of widespread disorganization within the emerging automobile industry, Robert C. Greenlease was among the front-runners who established the standards for successful marketing and distribution of automobiles nationwide. Central to his method was the service-oriented philosophy Greenlease described as: "If you perform a service you'll make money."² From modest beginnings, Greenlease developed an enterprise that spread across eight states and lasted sixty years.

Born in 1882, Robert C. Greenlease grew up on a farm in Saline County, Missouri where his family raised horses. Tough economic times forced the family to move to Kansas City in 1894. There, his father, and later Robert, found work at the Weber Engine Company, owned by George J. Weber, Robert's uncle. Greenlease left school after the sixth grade, going to work for the Swift meatpacking

¹ Sherry Lamb Schirmer and Richard D. McKinzie, *At the River's Bend: An Illustrated History of Kansas City, Independence and Jackson County*, (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1982), 304.

² Ibid.

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plant as an office boy and mail clerk. Three years later, after attending night classes at Spalding's Commercial College, he went to work for his uncle as a time and cost keeper.

While working at the Weber Engine Company, Greenlease became acquainted with one of the superintendents at the plant, Paul Karshner. Together the men designed their own motor car. In 1902, they entered into the business of custom-building automobiles. From its location at 217 East 15th Street, the company produced three "Kansas City Hummers" in three years before closing in 1904. The Hummer sold for about \$3,300. Greenlease later recollected that a Kansas senator bought the first of these handcrafted vehicles. The length of time and high cost required to construct each vehicle resulted in little profit.

When Karshner left the partnership, Greenlease opened a car repair and livery service. The Central Automobile and Livery Company rented cars and drivers to residents and visitors eager to drive the City's new boulevards. His first vehicle was a 1905 single-cylinder Cadillac purchased from Fred Patee, the first Cadillac dealer in Kansas City. The business soon grew to include seven livery vehicles in addition to the repair business.

Greenlease opened his first automobile dealership in 1907 as an agent for the Thomas Flyer. The seven-passenger car rented for \$6 to \$7 an hour, including a driver. The popular livery service netted Greenlease up to \$100 a day. However, the large Thomas Flyers did not sell well. Just as the company was preparing to introduce a line of smaller vehicles, the Chalmers Motor Company acquired it. A representative of Thomas Flyers suggested Greenlease contact Henry Leland, founder and owner of the Cadillac Automobile Company.

In 1902, Henry M. Leland, a precision manufacturer of automotive components, organized the Cadillac Automobile Company, which became known for its innovation and high standards.³ During a time of rapid technological advancement, Cadillac consistently improved standard automobile design. Among Cadillac's innovations was the production of the Osceola in 1905, the first step-in closed-car design. In addition, the Cadillac School of Applied Mechanics, founded in 1907, became the first school to train machinists, technicians, and toolmakers in automotive mechanics. The following year, the Royal Automobile Club in London awarded Cadillac the Dewar Trophy for advancement in the interchangeability of parts, which was a precursor to mass production.

In 1904, Fred Patee opened the first Cadillac dealership in Kansas City at 1319 East 15th Street. Within a year, two additional dealerships represented the Cadillac Automobile Company in Kansas City: one at 1421-23 Walnut Avenue and one at the southwest corner of 11th Street and Baltimore Avenue. An illustrated advertisement in Hoyer's 1905 Kansas City directory heralded Cadillac as "Pre-eminently the Automobile of Kansas City. Ten times as many sold in Kansas City as any other make."⁴

³ "GM Corporate History - 1900." (General Motors Corporation, 2002. accessed 5 November 2002); available from http://www.gm.com/company/corp_info/history/gmhis1900.html; Internet.

⁴ *Thirty-fifth Annual Issue 1905 Hoyer's Kansas City Directory*, (Kansas City: Hoyer Directory Company, 1905), 1288.

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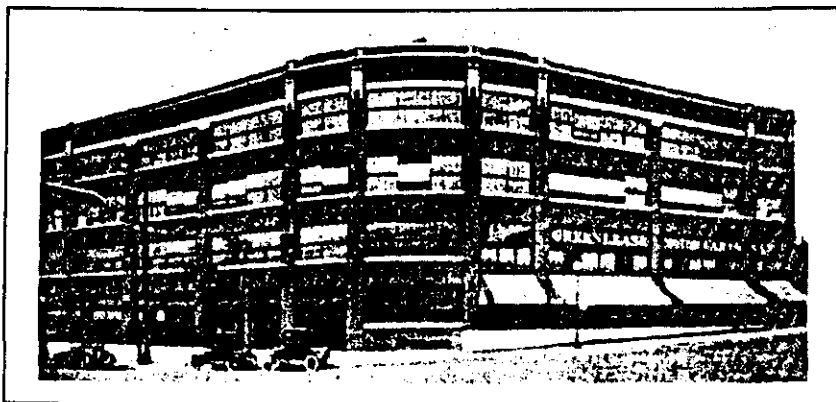
Greenlease Cadillac Building
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After contacting Leland, Greenlease made several trips to Detroit and received visits from Cadillac representatives before the company awarded him a franchise. During one visit, he purchased eight 1908 model vehicles for \$1,400 each and sold them in Kansas City below the \$2,000 list price. Shortly thereafter, Cadillac released the improved, more affordable 1909 model for a retail price of \$1,400. Greenlease sold seventy of the vehicles within a year.⁵

In July 1909, General Motors purchased Cadillac for \$5.5 million. As a division of General Motors, Cadillac continued to be a leader in setting standards for the automobile industry. In 1911, Cadillac became the first to include the electric self-starter as standard equipment and, as a result, again received the Dewar Trophy for the most important contribution to the automotive industry that year. Cadillac later became the first manufacturer in the United States to produce a V-type, water-cooled, eight-cylinder engine and the first in the industry to use thermostatic control of an auto cooling system.⁶

In addition to being a Cadillac dealer, Greenlease was also the sole distributor for Cadillac automobiles in the region. As both dealer and distributor, Greenlease's initial nine-county sales territory soon expanded through a series of partnerships to include Western Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, the Texas Panhandle, Colorado, and the Dakotas. Of the seventeen Cadillac distributorships nationwide, Greenlease controlled five; three of which made a profit during the Great Depression.⁷

As the Greenlease Motor Car Company expanded during the early to mid-1910s, it outgrew its location at 1612 Grand Avenue. In 1916, Greenlease revealed plans to construct a "permanent sales and service facility" for his franchise. The new location – bounded by Gillham Road, McGee Trafficway, and 29th Street – was easily accessible from downtown as well as from suburban neighborhoods and provided ample space for sales, service, and auto storage.



Greenlease Cadillac Building, c.1918.

Prior to beginning design work on the project, Greenlease and his architect, Lewis Haverkamp, toured modern automobile showrooms, service and distribution facilities in the eastern states. The resulting four-story Greenlease Cadillac Building was among the first in Kansas City to follow the all-under-one-roof format recently established in the auto industry. It featured a salesroom in the triangular south end with sufficient floor space to accommodate twelve display vehicles, a series of sales offices, and a large

⁵ Richard B. Fowler, "Robert C. Greenlease Biographical Sketch," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 23 September 1951 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

⁶ "GM Corporate History — 1910," (General Motors Corporation, 2002, accessed 5 November 2002); available from http://www.gm.com/company/corp_info/history/gmhis1910.html; Internet.

⁷ Schirmer and McKinzie. 304.

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service area. The service area incorporated a freight elevator large enough to transport a vehicle between floors. The upper stories accommodated additional service functions, such as vehicle construction and painting. The building permit estimated construction costs at \$100,000.⁸

As the extensive Greenlease enterprise continued to grow, additional space became necessary at the 2900 Gillham Road headquarters. In 1948, Greenlease announced the construction of a 10,000-square-foot addition on the north end of the existing building to provide additional service facilities. An existing service lot was moved to the northeast corner of McGee Trafficway and 29th Street, where they constructed a 20-foot high limestone retaining wall.⁹ Completed in 1951, the air conditioned, concrete block addition had an exposed truss roof system and brick facing that matched the main building. In addition to a service area, it held offices, a reception room, and a lounge.

By 1950, the Greenlease auto empire employed over 500 workers in the sales, service, and distribution of Cadillacs, Oldsmobiles, and other General Motors products. During the prosperous post-World War II period, it was more difficult for Greenlease to obtain vehicles than to sell the \$4,000 cars. In 1950 alone, Greenlease's multiple partnerships sold and distributed over 6,600 new cars, generating roughly \$24 million in sales. Of those vehicles, the Greenlease dealership in Kansas City sold 558 cars and distributed between 1,100 and 1,200 cars to fifty-eight Cadillac dealers in Western Missouri and Kansas.¹⁰



Greenlease Cadillac Building, 1940.

In addition to being a leader in the automobile sales industry, Greenlease was active in early efforts to pave roads in Missouri. In 1917, Greenlease served as president of the local Motor Car Dealer's association and helped organize the National Automobile Dealers association. He was also involved with early auto shows in Kansas City that made new automobile models available for public viewing.

In 1950, after forty-two years as a Cadillac dealer and distributor, General Motors honored Robert Greenlease as the dealer with the longest association with a single motor company in the United States. In 1965, when distributorships were discontinued, Greenlease was General Motor's most senior agent and the last of their distributors nationwide. Two years later, Cadillac honored Greenlease at the beginning of his sixtieth year in business with the company. He died shortly thereafter in September 1969.

THE EVOLUTION OF AUTOMOBILE COMMERCE

⁸ City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, Building Permit number 12367, 10 June 1918.

⁹ This retaining wall and service lot are on the east side of Gillham Road. This property is no longer under the same ownership as the dealership and it is not included in this nomination.

¹⁰ Fowler.

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Kansas City's position as a prominent manufacturing and supply center ensured its role as a major player in the development of the automobile industry, not only in terms of manufacturing, but also as a regional center for auto sales and distribution. The Kansas City, Missouri city directories corroborate this, with automobile and "motor car" company listings tripling in less than five years, from twenty in 1906 to seventy in 1910. By the end of the following decade, the number of automobile dealers outranked all other retail establishments, with the exception of food vendors.¹⁷

Dealers were fundamental to the success of automakers during this time. The dealership was the first point of contact with the potential car-buying public. Automobile manufacturers, while focusing on technological innovations and improvements, also developed vast retail networks by offering franchise opportunities to local businessmen nationwide. In exchange for selling rights within a defined territory, the franchise contract required the dealer to provide an adequate sales and service facility, proper signage, a stock of spare parts, and repair service for cars sold. Auto company representatives often visited the potential dealer on site to determine suitability. In addition, the dealer had to have at least one new model on display at all times. The defined sales territory prevented competition among dealers representing the same make of car and maintained the effectiveness of the franchise dealer system.¹⁸ Dealers who sold in another dealer's territory received fines from the manufacturer and risked losing their franchise. A successful dealer might receive an expanded territory, as did Greenlease, thus ensuring a wider consumer base, increased profits, and further expansion opportunities.

In addition to a network of dealerships, large manufacturers established regional distributorships and factory branches in strategic commercial hubs nationwide. Kansas City's locale, combined with its superior rail and freight infrastructure, made it an ideal point for automobile distribution throughout the Midwest and Southwest. The 1914 Gate City directory for Kansas City, Missouri indicates that at least twenty-two auto manufacturers had either distributorships or factory branches in Kansas City, including Cadillac, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, King, Overland, REO, Studebaker, Ford, Buick, and Packard.¹⁹ By 1922, there are separate listings for "Automobile Agencies, Distributors and Direct Factory Branches," under which the only listing for "Cadillac Automobile" reads, "Greenlease Motor Car Co."²⁰

These distributors enjoyed a variety of benefits, including a much wider sales territory, the ability to establish new franchises within that territory, and extended lines of credit with the manufacturer. Often the distributor's employees received salaries directly from the manufacturer. In exchange for these perks, the distributor or factory branch had greater responsibilities than the dealer. In addition to expanded service and parts departments, the distributor's responsibilities included retrieving rail-shipped, semi-assembled automobiles and the subsequent assembly and transportation of these vehicles to a storage facility.²¹ These responsibilities required the distributor to maintain a full staff of factory-

¹⁷ Schirmer and McKinzie, 229.

¹⁸ Genat, 19.

¹⁹ *Forty-fourth Annual Issue 1914 Kansas City, Missouri City Directory*, (Kansas City: Gate City Directory Company, 1914), 5-8, 2225-26.

²⁰ *Fifty-second Annual Issue 1922 Kansas City Missouri City Directory*, (Kansas City: Gate City Directory Company, 1922), 2319.

²¹ Genat, 20.

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The sixty-year career of Robert C. Greenlease paralleled the growth of the automobile industry itself. His early experimental ventures occurred during the hectic infancy of the auto industry, a time when thousands of speculative carmakers and dealers joined the fray. The ensuing expansion of the Greenlease auto empire mirrored that of the industry as lesser companies failed and patterns for successful marketing and sales evolved. Of the fifty makes available from auto dealers in Kansas City during the 1910s, Cadillac was one of only nine still available in the mid-1950s. Just as his career began during a time of major change within the auto industry, so did Greenlease's career close. When General Motors discontinued all franchise distributorships during the mid-1960s, Greenlease was General Motor's most senior agent as well as their last franchise distributor.

When first introduced at the turn of the twentieth century, auto production was a very time-consuming process, with each vehicle assembled from start to finish before work began on the next.¹¹ This labor-intensive process kept automobile costs high – between \$2,000 and \$3,000 – roughly twice the annual income of an average United States worker.¹² As a result, during its first decade on the market the automobile remained a vehicle for the wealthy, with only approximately 4,100 produced nationwide in 1900.¹³

The legion of carmakers competing nationwide developed a variety of technological, marketing, and business strategies in an effort to increase profits. Early innovations included the first step-in closed-car design, Cadillac's 1905 Osceola, as well as Charles F. Kettering's 1911 invention of the electric self-starter.¹⁴ However, the most significant innovation in the industry was Ford's introduction of the assembly line at the Highland Park, Michigan Model T manufacturing plant in 1913. The drastically lower cost of production allowed volume to rise and retail prices to drop. In addition, Ford introduced the concept of the rebate in 1914, a marketing practice that remains popular. Other automobile manufacturers followed suit and once the automobile became affordable for the average American, its popularity skyrocketed. From 1914 to 1917, annual automobile production in the United States jumped from 573 thousand to 1.9 million.¹⁵

During the early years of the twentieth century, the increasing popularity and availability of the automobile in Kansas City reflected national trends. Listings under "Automobiles" in the business section of *Hoye's Kansas City Directory* grew from a single vendor in 1900 to six vendors in 1903 to 20 vendors in 1906. In 1907, the city's first auto show attracted 20,000 visitors, even though only a few hundred Kansas Citians actually owned automobiles. A mere 400 cars maneuvered Kansas City streets at the time, whereas within fifteen years the number had grown to 55,000.¹⁶

¹¹ Robert Genat, *The American Car Dealership*, (Osceola, Wisconsin: MBI Publishing Company, 1999), 8.

¹² Nicole M. Sabatini, "Request for Determination of Eligibility Assessment — Kirkwood Building, 1737 McGee Street, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri." (Kansas City: Susan Richards Johnson & Associates, Inc., 2000), 2.

¹³ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 77.

¹⁴ "GM Corporate History – 1910."

¹⁵ Genat, 9.

¹⁶ "Kansas City's Motor and Street Growth Since 1908," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 24 June 1923 (Newspaper Clipping File, Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

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trained mechanics, sales staff, and managers. As regional demand for automobiles grew, distributor benefits enabled Greenlease to form and expand his vast auto empire.

During the earliest years of the automobile, dealerships nationwide located in downtown commercial districts, adjacent to all other varieties of retail establishments. As the increasing popularity of the automobile stimulated the construction of new auto-specific buildings, a new type of commercial district developed — "Automobile Row." Located just outside the historic downtown, these areas were often on the streetcar line and included all kinds of automotive-related establishments, from new and used car sales to parts, service, and repair.

In Kansas City, automobile row first developed along the north-south arteries of Main, Grand, McGee, and Locust streets between 11th and 18th streets. By 1906, almost 60 percent of the twenty-four listings under "Automobiles" in Hoye's Kansas City Directory were located in this area.²² By 1910, the total number quadrupled, with the majority of new listings located along the same north-south arteries and extending as far south as 35th Street. Nevertheless, the heart of Kansas City's Automobile Row during the 1910s generally centered around McGee Street and Grand Avenue between 15th and 20th streets. This area included almost half of all automotive businesses in Kansas City in 1920.²³

In an effort to cater to his target consumer audience, Greenlease strategically chose the location at 29th Street and Gillham Road, adjacent to the recently completed McGee Trafficway. As Greenlease stated, "Until McGee Road came, there was no location in Kansas City to meet our requirements....Retail sales have increased rapidly, which meant we had to look for more room. The increasing number of women drivers demands a service building outside the downtown congestion."²⁴ Located outside the central business district and almost ten blocks south of the heart of Kansas City's automobile row, the new Greenlease Cadillac Building became an inviting destination; not only for the increasing number of women drivers Greenlease felt might be reluctant to venture downtown, but also for the high-end car buyer in general.²⁵

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP

The design and construction of the Greenlease Cadillac Building occurred during a highpoint in America's infatuation with the automobile and the rapid expansion of the auto industry. The construction techniques and arrangement of interior spaces illustrate a building type new to Kansas City and only recently developed as the standard for optimal integration of automobile sales, service, and distribution. The design and layout of this building type accommodated an elegant sales space with functional service and storage spaces. The Greenlease Cadillac Building successfully incorporated these elements and served its intended function for over fifty years.

²² *Thirty-sixth Annual Issue 1906 Hoye's Kansas City Directory*, (Kansas City: Hoye Directory Company, 1906), 1544.

²³ Sabatini, 4.

²⁴ "Greenlease Motor Car Co. — New Building Proposed," *Kansas City Star*, 31 August 1916 (Newspaper Clipping File, Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

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During the first decade of the automobile, sales and service occurred in facilities constructed for other functions, such as livery stables, carriage dealers, and blacksmith and bicycle shops. Viewed as a recreational vehicle for the wealthy, automobiles did not initially instigate the construction of new buildings and were sold and serviced alongside earlier modes of transportation. However, the increasing popularity of the automobile outpaced the existing retail infrastructure. By the early 1900s, automobile merchants outgrew their converted nineteenth century buildings, dropped their other product lines, and constructed the first generation of buildings intended for the specific purpose of marketing and servicing automobiles.

These first-generation buildings followed traditional one- and two-part commercial design, incorporating a storefront, an upper story, and a cornice. The only apparent functional modification of the typical Main Street storefront was the introduction of a larger display window to present the larger product and larger doorways to allow for the movement of automobiles into and out of the building. Otherwise, these buildings were indistinguishable from other businesses on Main Street.

No longer considered merely an amusement, by 1905 the automobile became a genuine means of transportation. Automobile sales increased more than 45-fold in the decade following 1900, from approximately 4,100 to 186,000 units manufactured nationally.²⁶ Concurrent with its increase in popularity, a legion of carmakers and dealers materialized, all vying for the attention of the discriminating consumer. The buildings from which cars were sold and serviced became increasingly important in marketing strategy as a means of instilling both interest and confidence in the prospective buyer. A sturdy, well-designed building conveyed stability and longevity, while distinctive, elegant showrooms communicated quality and refinement.²⁷

In 1907, Albert Kahn inaugurated the second generation of auto-specific buildings with his design for the Packard Motor Car Company in New York City. Kahn made significant structural and spatial improvements with his "all-under-one-roof design" while fulfilling popular expectations for commercial design.²⁸ The use of reinforced concrete, a recent technological innovation, was indispensable to the design of the structure. Its load-carrying capabilities, vibration resistance, and relative fireproof qualities made it ideal for buildings within which automobiles were maneuvered and serviced. Terracotta effectively camouflaged the reinforced concrete structure of the three-story building. The interior spaces included an elegant two-story automobile showroom. Beyond the showroom, the atmosphere shifted to the often loud and dirty car repair and storage areas. Whereas the structural concrete columns in the showroom were masked with decorative plaster or marble for aesthetic purposes, the columns in the service and storage areas were left bare. The spatial arrangement successfully integrated the functionally varied interior spaces.

Kahn's design became a prototype for automobile sales, service, and distribution facilities. By the early 1910s, larger auto manufacturing companies adapted the format for their flagship sales and distribution buildings. In a desire to influence their expanding national network of dealers and distributors, the

²⁶ Liebs, 77.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *Architecture of America, The: A Social and Cultural History*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), 242.

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companies invited franchise holders to tour these "model facilities" and encouraged them to adopt the format for their new buildings back home.

Robert Greenlease was one such dealer/distributor influenced by these prototypes. In August 1916, when Greenlease announced his intention to construct an expanded sales and service facility at the McGee Street and Gillham Road location, the *Kansas City Star* reported that the preliminary plans being drawn up for the new building, "[were] not to be approved until Mr. Greenlease and the architects visit Eastern salesrooms and service stations."²⁹ Greenlease's insistence on viewing model facilities in the East suggests the lack of appropriate examples in the Kansas City area. Indeed, a review of historic photographs and building permits identifies only one building of a similar design existed in Kansas City's automobile row at the time, the Studebaker Corporation Building constructed in 1915 at 2029 Grand Avenue.

The facilities viewed by Greenlease and his architect, Lewis W. Haverkamp, no doubt inspired the design for the Greenlease Cadillac Building. An excellent example of the format established by Kahn a decade earlier, the four-story reinforced concrete building includes an elegant automobile showroom with a 20-foot-high ceiling and room to display twelve cars, tile floor, marble wainscoting, and plaster walls, ceiling, and columns with ornamental capitals that include the Cadillac shield and floral swags. A row of small sales offices at the rear of the showroom provides a barrier to the unfinished functional spaces behind the sales floor. These spaces included service and used car sales departments on the first floor and storage and shop space on the upper floors. Punctuating the storage and service spaces are bare reinforced concrete columns with polygonal "mushroom" caps supporting the continuous concrete floor slabs. A freight elevator at the center of the building carried automobiles between floors.

During the mid- to late 1910s, fifty different makes of automobiles were available in Kansas City, ranging in price from \$395 to \$10,000.³⁰ As it was common during this period for speculative car makers and dealers to fail in the vast and competitive auto market, a common concern for buyers was whether parts and service would be available for a particular make. In response, architects of second-generation auto-specific structures incorporated fine materials and decorative embellishments to convey traditional concepts of style, inspiring confidence in the consumer. Rather than alarm the public with a bare concrete structure, architects clad these buildings in terracotta and brick. Haverkamp's design for the Greenlease Cadillac Building was no exception. The textured brick with restrained terracotta embellishments, including modest Cadillac corporate symbols, express an established commercial architectural style that underscores the stability and prosperity of the business.

ARCHITECT

Very little is known about the life of Lewis W. Haverkamp. During the early 1910s, Haverkamp served as a draftsman in the offices of architects Louis Curtiss and Herman J. Stroeh. Curtiss, in particular, was

²⁹ "Greenlease Motor Car Co. — New Building Proposed."

³⁰ "Motor Show Was Big Even in 1915," *Kansas City Star*, 27 February 1955 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

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a forerunner in the use of structural concrete and it is likely that while working with Curtiss, Haverkamp became familiar with its advantages, including the large open floor slabs and curtain walls this material allowed. By 1915, Haverkamp achieved the title of architect and practiced in the Curtiss Building at 1118 McGee Street. Later in the decade, he practiced from his home at 3233 Brooklyn Avenue where he designed the Greenlease Cadillac Building. After 1918, Haverkamp no longer appeared in Kansas City directories and no additional buildings are attributed to him.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of Lots 1-12 in the Coleman Place addition, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, except the portion theretofore taken in the alignment of McGee Trafficway. Said premises being further described as the tract of land bounded by Gillham Road, McGee Trafficway, and 29th Street in Kansas City.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

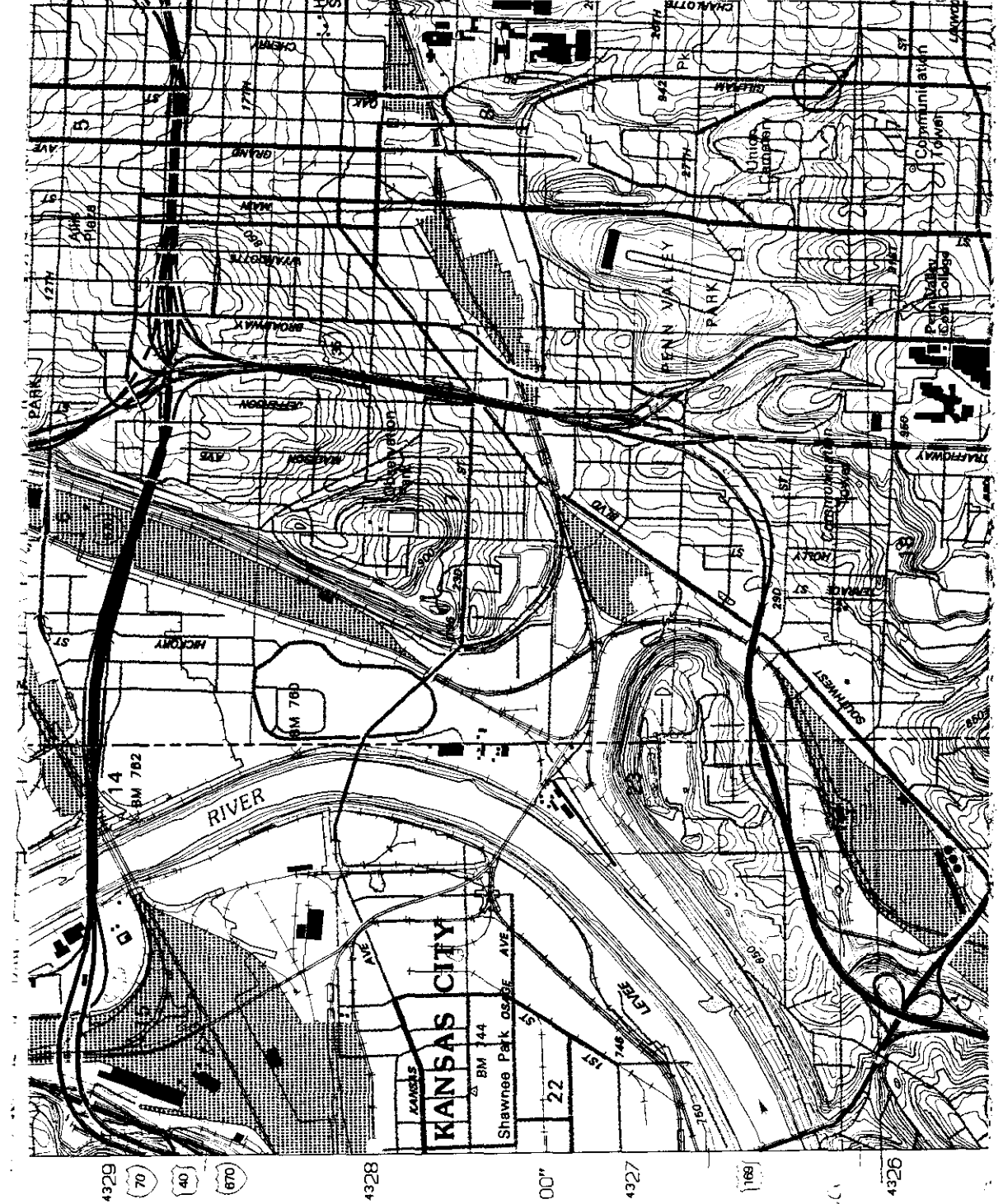
The boundary for the Greenlease Cadillac Building includes the city lots on which it was erected and has historically been associated.

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PHOTO LOG

Photographer: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, Kansas City, Missouri
Date of Photographs: October 2002
Location of Original Negatives: UHP3, LLC
2838 Warwick Trafficway
Kansas City, Missouri 64108

Photograph Number	Camera View
1.	View NW, main block, east and south façades
2.	View NW, main block, east and south façades
3.	View NE, main block, west façade
4.	View SE, main block and addition, west façade
5.	View E, main block, west façade
6.	View S, addition, north façade
7.	View SW, main block and addition, east façade
8.	View N, cornice detail, south façade
9.	View W, garage bay detail, east façade
10.	View E, showroom interior
11.	Showroom interior, typical column capital
12.	Showroom interior, typical ceiling detail
13.	View NW, showroom interior
14.	Shop space interior, typical view
15.	View NE, Shop space interior
16.	Shop space interior, auto elevator
17.	Addition interior, typical view



10-11-11

4329
70
40
670
4328
5' 00"
4327
1689
4326

SHAWNEE PARK
KANSAS CITY
MISSOURI
UNION STATION
COMMUNICATION TOWER



















